The Privilege of Believers.

BEING THE

SUBSTANCE

OF A

DISCOURSE

Delivered at

GROGUN in the County of ANTRIM in IRELAND,

In the YEAR 1754.

JOHN CENNICK.

Now in Christ Jesus, ye who were some time afar off are brought nigh by the Blood of Christ, Ephes. ii. 13.
It shall come to pass in the Place where it was said, ye are not my People, there shall they be called the Children of the Living God, Rom. ix. 26.
I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty, 2 Cor. vi. 18.

THE SECOND EDITION.

DUBLIN Printed:

LONDON, Reprinted; and Sold by M. LEWIS, in Paternoster-Row, near Cheapside. 1756.

12345 Trans.
Tongue

JOHN I. 12.

As many as received him to them gave he Power to become Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.

WHEN the due Time was come, in which the *God of Iſrael* would be *Immanuel* and tabernacle with Men, he came according to the many Prophecies to *his own People*, the Family of *Abraham*, to whom and to their Fathers he had been promiſed upwards of two thouſand Years; and for whoſe coming all the Tribes had waited with great Impatience and Earneſtneſs from the Time of the Departure of the Sceptre from *Judah*, which happened not long before his Appearance in the Fleſh; but whether his mean Form, his low Birth and Eſtate in the World, or their being diſappointed in their carnal Expectation of his reſtoring the Kingdom to *Iſrael*, was the Reaſon, or both together, it is certain *his own People received him not*. They were offended at him, and ſcorned to acknowledge him for *the Meſſiah*.

His whole Doctrine and manner of Preaching was rejected by the far greater Part of the *Jews*, who always had him in Deriſion, and eſpecially

when he ſaid he was the I A M, they openly blaſphemed and rebelled againſt him. Thus *they forſook the Rock that made them*, and hid their Faces from that *Jehovah* whom their Fathers *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* ſaw, and who was worſhipped by them and their Children through many Generations, and *who was not aſhamed to be called their God.*

Some however, even of this ſinful and adulterous People, waited for the Day of his coming, and they like *Abraham* ſaw it and were glad.

Among theſe were *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, the Virgin *Mary*, *Simeon*, *Joſeph* of *Arimathea*, and *Anna* the Propheteſs. They knew when *Auguſtus Cæſar* laid the Tax upon the *Jews*, as well as others, *the Sceptre was certainly gone from* Judah, *and a Lawgiver from between his Feet*, and believed the *Shiloh* muſt be come; and as they were led by the *Holy Spirit* to look for him, his extream Poverty, Meanneſs, and deſpicable Appearance in the World did not ſtumble them. They believed on him, bleſſed *God* that their Eyes had ſeen his Salvation, and ſpake of him to all that looked for Redemption in *Iſrael*, to theſe, as well as to that *happy Few*, who in thoſe times received him, and all who have ſince believed on his Name, he has granted *the Privilege or Power of becoming Sons of God*, while all who receive him not, miſs this great Bleſſing, and ſuffer Loſs eternally.

From the Days of *God*'s being firſt *manifeſted in the Fleſh* to this Time, he is preached in the World, and now as well as formerly many receive him not. Some ſtand aloof, and hear concerning his Redemption, but are in no immediate Want, and let him go unconcernedly. He knocks indeed at the Door of their Hearts, but they are like the *Inns* in *Bethlehem*,

hem, there is no room for him there; the Pleaſures of this Life, the Deceits of Honours, Friends and Riches ſupply his Place, and they receive him not. Others like the proud *Children of Iſrael*, ſcorn to ſubmit to him, and with *Jewiſh* Haughtineſs deſpiſe his Godhead, and wantonly and preſumptuouſly, like *the Gentile and Heathen Nations* are reſolved *not to have this Man to reign over them*, or to acknowledge for their Lord, a Man who ſuffered Death upon a Croſs between two Thieves.

But yet there are ſome who ſtill receive *Jeſus* with open and glad Hearts, and who inherit the Adoption of Sons, and are numbered with his Friends, *and counted to the Lord for a Generation*. Theſe in general are *the Poor in Spirit*, Souls who were ready to periſh, loſt Sheep, miſerable and unhappy Perſons, and ſuch as were ſelf-ſpoiled and ruined, together with ſuch as had ſincerely ſought after Righteouſneſs, by Works under the Law, and who weary and almoſt in Deſpair at finding they failed, were ready to conclude themſelves without Hope; theſe when *Chriſt* has been preached to them, or when the *Holy Ghoſt* has glorified *the Loving Saviour* in their Sight, like *Zaccheus* have gladly received him, and ſo commenced *his Children, his Sons and Daughters*.

To receive Chriſt, implies not only a Conceſſion to the Doctrine of *the Creed*, or aſſenting to the Truth and Validity of *the Scriptures*, or the acknowledging him to be *the Lord*, *the Meſſiah* and *Chriſt*, that ſhould come into the World, and ſo chooſing to be called by his Name, and blame *Jews* and *Deiſts* who are of another Mind, but *to receive him* is, to accept of him, as he is offered and preached in the Scriptures, as our *Lord God, our only Saviour, our Righteouſneſs, Wiſdom, Holineſs and Redemption*. It is a cloſing in with him in his New-Teſtament; he becomes

comes a *Father* to us, and we become *his Children*; he is *our God*, and we are *his People*; *our Shepherd*, and we are *his Sheep*; *our Husband*, and we are *his Rib*, *his Sister*, *his Spouse and Wife*; yea, it is receiving of him into our Hearts, by *his Spirit*, we let in him *that stands at the Door and knocks*, and he sups with us, gives us a Foretaste and Pledge of the Marriage-Feast, the Earnest that we shall sup with him there for ever. This cannot be learnt in Theory. It is no Matter for the Sensual and Natural Man, he cannot understand it. In this Matter, no worldly Wisdom helps or avails, no large Capacity, no Depth of Thought is of use, but *an honest Heart*, who Day and Night thirsts for Salvation, and gasps after *Jesus*, as a Hart for the Water, and *as a dry Land for refreshing Rain*, and who learns it of the *Holy Ghost* within. There he brings the News, and *makes them to understand this Wisdom secretly*. He speaks in *the soft still Voice*, Open thy Heart, *Open the everlasting Doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Open my Love, my Dove, and I will come in*, *Jesus* says, and where he is manifested, there is *his Reward with him*; *his Father* also comes and makes his Abode there, and the chaste and new washed Temple of the Body becomes *the House of God*.

The receiving Christ is a thing wholly for the Heart, and is known only by Experience. It is the common Privilege of all the Faithful, every Believer in *Jesus* knows this precious Benefit of having received *the Lord*, and whoever does not know he hath found *the Saviour*, he is no *true Christian*. *As many as believe in his Name* have him in them. He dwells with them, he is their new and eternal Life, as it is written, *He that hath the Son hath Life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not Life*. St. *Paul* says, *Now the Life which I live in the Flesh is*

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the Life of the Son of God. It is not I that live, it is Chriſt that liveth in me. When one of the Martyrs was adviſed, *to have God before his Eyes*, when he was near his Execution, he anſwered chearfully, *I have him in my Heart.* This is what I mean, and what the *Holy Ghoſt* means in the Text, for ſuch and ſuch only are of his Family who receive him. Others, whether they are Profeſſors or Prophane, live *without Chriſt in the World.*

Our Saviour never intended when he was taken up bodily into Heaven, to leave his Diſciples Orphans, and deſolate upon Earth, he promiſed certainly to be with them and in them, and not only would ſo appear to them, who were then his Followers, and let them ſee and enjoy him, that they ſhould find he had not left them comfortleſs, but he made the ſame Promiſe to their Generations and Children then unborn when he ſaid, *if any Man love me, I will come to him, and manifeſt myſelf to him; I will bring my Father, and we will come and make our Abode with him.* Again, *Behold I ſtand at the Door and knock, if any Man hear my Voice and open the Door, I will come into him,* &c.

All who believe on him find his Words *true and faithful*, they are *his Witneſſes*, that he has fulfilled his Promiſe, and happily experience that he is come with Salvation to them, and *the high and lofty One who inhabits Eternity, and who dwells in the high and holy Place, vouchſafes to dwell with them.*

But the Receivers of *Chriſt*, or ſuch as believe in him, are not only thus honoured, they not only receive *the Lamb of God* into their Houſes, *the King of Saints, the God of Heaven and Earth* does not only condeſcend to make their Bodies his Temple, but they receive with him Remiſſion of Sins, Deliver-

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ance from Hell, Death and the Law, beſide *they have Power to become Sons of God*, or the Privilege to call *the Father of Jeſus, our Father*, and he is pleaſed to adopt them for Children, and to call them *my Sons and Daughters*. This is that Doctrine ſo often repeated, even in the Old Teſtament Times, as well as by the Apoſtles of *our Saviour*, and by *our Lord* himſelf.

In the New Teſtament Writings, *Servants of God* are clearly diſtinguiſhed from *Sons*, for indeed there is a great Difference between them. *A Son*, or *Child of God* may be *a Servant*, he may over and above his Sonſhip be employed in *the Redeemer's* Work, and labour in his Vineyard, as the Apoſtles and other Miniſters of *Chriſt* have done; but their Hope was not that they had been *Servants*, or proſpered in the Work of their Maſter, nor did their Safety conſiſt therein, but in being made *Children of God by Faith in Chriſt Jeſus*. When the Diſciples once returned from their Labour of Preaching and Working of Miracles, *&c.* in the Name of their Maſter, they told him with a Sort of Joy how well they had ſucceeded, and how even *Satan* was ſubject to their Word, but *Jeſus* anſwered them, *Notwithſtanding rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your Names are written in Heaven*; and at another time he told them, *I have not called you Servants, but Friends*. Again, *a Servant abideth not in the Houſe alway, but a Son abideth alway*; ſo when he ſent *Magdalene* to tell them he was riſen, he ſays, *go tell my Brethren, that I go to my Father and to your Father*, &c. He had often done after this Manner in the Days of his Fleſh, he taught them in their Prayers, to call *God their Father*; when ye pray, ſay *Our Father*, &c. Again, *fear not little Flock, it is your Father's good Pleaſure to give you the Kingdom*. Again,

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your Heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that aſk him. This is what *David*, *Iſaiah*, *Ezekiel*, and *Jeremiah* had foreſeen ſo long ago, when they ſaid; *Thou ſhalt call me my Father.* And that Name was known among the Prophets ſome hundreds of Years before the New-Teſtament was of Force, and they taught the People how *the Redeemer* would bring the Souls ſtrayed afar off, and ſuch who had forfeited their Right to the Kingdom, into the neareſt Fellowſhip, and Kindred with *God*, that he would be *their Father*, and vouchſafe to call them *my Children.* This is now come to paſs, and effected thro' the Death and Blood-ſhedding of *the Lamb.* We, who were afar off by wicked Works, and who could not have claimed the Benefits of the Family of *Abraham*, for he was not our Father, and *Iſrael* acknowledged us not as Children, are now adopted by Faith into *the Family and Houſhold of God.* We are *Sons* and have received the *Power to call God Father*, *we have received the Spirit if Adoption whereby we cry Abba Father.* This is *the glorious Liberty of the Children of God*, and is the higheſt and moſt deſirable Privilege that can be attained.

It was formerly the Name and Character of the Saints, and they were called ſo of the *Lord*, *Servants of God*, *they ſerved the Lord in their Generation*, but it is not uſed ſo much in the Goſpel, becauſe *Jeſus* who was *Lord of All*, *and the only begotten Son of God*, has taken *the Servants* Place, and done all the Work worthy to be mentioned, and by Way of Eminence, is called of *God*, *my Righteous Servant*, All our Services are nothing in Compariſon with his, and not worthy to be named. He has made Peace, he has bruiſed the *Serpent*'s Head, he has ſweat Blood, and opened a Fountain for Sin; he has undergone the Chaſtiſement of his People, obtained

their Pardon, and wrought out with Cries and Tears a perfect Righteouſneſs, and made, in offering up his Body on the Tree, a full, compleat and ſufficient Atonement for Sin, diſannulled the old Covenant, aboliſhed Death, removed the Curſe, and carried away the Iniquity of us all. He is only worthy of the Name *Servant of God*, and deſerves and merits above all to be accepted for his Works ſake, by which we are made Righteous and juſtified.

But here it muſt be obſerved, how ſuperficial their *Chriſtianity* is, who imagine they are in a ſafe Eſtate, and in a fair Way of going to Heaven, becauſe they do good Works, as they ſay, and *ſerve God*. Such muſt be told, *if you go no farther ye are not ſafe, you are yet under the Law, and have no Hope but the Hope of a* Jew, *and one who expects his Works and Duties will intitle him to the Favour of Almighty God, and bring him to the Reward of Eternal Life.* O let the Miniſters of *our Saviour* endeavour to undeceive ſuch People, let them make their Righteouſneſs appear; as it is, a Cob-web, a Garment of Fig-leaves and filthy Rags, and *make mention of Chriſt's Righteouſneſs and his only.*

Are any ſo ſhallow and thoughtleſs in religious Matters, as to imagine their Alms will purchaſe Heaven, their Tears waſh out Sin, their imperfect and ſlight Obedience be accepted, and get the Kingdom for a Reward? O No! You who think ſo, trample upon *the Blood of Jeſus*, and ſlight the great Price he paid for your Ranſom. Nothing leſs than the Blood, the precious Heart's-Blood of *God's only Son*, his many Thouſands of Tears, and his Sweat in the Garden, can waſh out Sin, and quench the Divine Wrath. No Price leſs than himſelf ranſomed us out of *Satan's* Bands, his whole Life's Obedience,

ence, his ſore Afflictions, his Faithfulneſs in his Temptations, his painful Death and his Anguiſh and Torments, bought Heaven for us, and his many Years of Sufferings alone made Satisfaction, and recovered us out of our Enemy's Hands. Be aſhamed, and bluſh then, ye who have boaſted of what ye have done; be greatly aſhamed that ye have done no more to his Honour, and ſo much to grieve him. Think what Sin have you obliterated and cancelled? What Iniquity have you purged away with all your Doings? Put all you have done together, and all the Works and Merits of Men and Angels, and it would not avail you, if you receive not *Chriſt* into your Hearts, ye are only *Servants*, and for the leaſt of your Diſobedience you may be ſent in ſtrict Juſtice to Hell after all.

Herein then *a Servant* is different from *a Son of God*. A Man may have lived a ſtrict Life, done much Good, and obſerved the Law, been zealous, a Promoter of Piety; he may have prayed often and long, given away much to the Poor, and did all in his Power to pleaſe and ſerve *God*, but then if he has no more, he is not a *Chriſtian*; a *Turk*, a *Jew*, a *Heathen* may go thus far. And St. *Paul* and *Cornelius* did all this when they were without *our Saviour*, and *aliens to the Common-Wealth of Iſrael*, and needed Converſion to make them ſafe. All the Promiſes in the Law were temporal, and the Rewards preached to ſuch as lived ſtrictly under the Covenant of Works were entirely ſuch as related to this Life, but *God* never promiſed to make Men *his Children* on any Account but through *Faith*, that the Divine Favour might be of *Free-Grace*, unmerited and undeſerved Love. If a Man ſhould ſerve his Maſter quite faithfully, do all that he was commanded, and not wrong him in any thing, not

ſquander away nor embezzle his Goods, but be truſty to the laſt Degree; work Day and Night, and fail in no Reſpect of his Service, could he therefore expect his Maſter would make him his Son, and adopt him his Heir to all he had? Or could he think he had merited ſo much? Would not his Wages and full Hire be his juſt Reward? In like manner, *Jeſus* ſays, *When ye have done all that is commanded, ſay we are unprofitable Servants, we have done no more than our Duty.* I wiſh only all who argue and diſpute ſo much for their Works could ſay, they had done all that was commanded them; but even then it would be Preſumption to ſuppoſe they had a Right to Heaven, and to be of *the Lord's Family.* All who ſerve *God*, ſhall meet with their due Reward, but as it was never promiſed, ſo they cannot enter the Kingdom by their Works, nor ſtay in the Houſe of *God* alway, but as *Hagar* and *Iſhmael* were turned out of *Abraham*'s Houſe, as *Bond Servants*, ſo ſhall all who proudly have thought by their Merits to get Salvation. They are *Servants* and not *Sons*. *Satan* and all wicked Men are more or leſs *Servants of God*. When *God* bid *the Deſtroying Angel* kill the *Firſt-Born* in every Family in *Egypt*, but touch not one where the Blood was on the Door-poſts, he obeyed ſtrictly. When he gave *Satan* Leave to afflict *Job*, and touch all he had, only not to hurt his Life, he was punctual, and went no farther than his Commiſſion; ſo it was in the Matter of deceiving the Prophets of *Ahab*, but it was an Obedience of Dread and Fear, it was ſervile and not filial, ſo is the Obedience of three Parts of the World, they are over-awed by the Fears of Death, the Terrors of the Law, and the looking for Judgment, the Dread of Hell, and the Wrath of *God*, makes them in ſome Meaſure obedient, and reſtrains

ſtrains them from Sinning, but all this is nothing. Their Service is like the Service of *Satan*, it is done out of Fear and of Conſtraint, it is not *the Obedience of Sons*, and from *the Faith that works by Love*. They may carry it as far as they will, and go on till the laſt Day with their ſtriving and working, and plead it at the Judgment when they have done, and ſay, *Lord, we have been called by thy Name, we have eaten and drank in thy Preſence, we have caſt out Devils, and done many wonderful Works in thy Name*, and yet if they have gone no farther, *Jeſus* will anſwer them, *depart from me, I never knew ye*.

It is much otherwiſe with *true Believers*; to them is the Power given to be of near Kin to *the King of Kings*; they have *the Privilege to be Sons of God*. This Honour and unſpeakable Happineſs is given to thoſe who receive *Jeſus* in the World. This is conferred upon all freely, and only for *Jeſus*'s Sake, and is obtained by *all who believe in his Name*. *God* is ſo well pleaſed with *his Son*'s Free-will Offering, ſo ſatisfied with his Death and Obedience, that for a Reward for his Sufferings, he has given him all Believers, who ſhall be *his Brethren*, and *Children of his Father*. *God* therefore ſo glorifies and honours *his crucified Child*, that whoſoever in the World ſhall believe in him, ſhall by his Means be ſaved, and numbered with the Saints, and with *the Sons of God* in Glory everlaſting. This ſerves to exalt *our Saviour* and his Merits, whereby is known how precious and dear his Sufferings are in the Sight of *the God-head*, ſince whoever reſts thereon, and is thereon reſolved to venture all for ever, is made for ever happy. The Obedience in which he truſts, the Blood in which he believes, and the Righteouſneſs to which he looks, has deſerved for him a greater Happineſs than to have been made *an Angel*, or *Lord*

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of ten Worlds. He has *the Privilege to become a Son of God*, to be a younger Brother to *Jeſus Chriſt*, a near Relation to his *Creator and Saviour.*

This ſhould be the Aim of all enquiring and ſeeking Souls, this ſhould be *the Mark of the Prize of their High-Calling.* They are not invited by the Goſpel merely to eſcape Hell, or to fly *the Wrath to come*, or to be made again *a little lower than the Angels, to be crowned with Glory and Worſhip*, nor even to be reckoned with the chiefeſt of *the Principalities*, or to be raiſed to be on a Level with the higheſt *Seraphims*, but to be *Children of our Lord God*, to be in the Family, and Co-heirs with *Chriſt Jeſus*, to ſit at his Table, to be *his Brethren and Siſters*, and *this Honour have all his Saints.*

Men who have received this Privilege, and embraced this glorious Offer, tho' they are not brought into the Poſſeſſion of ſo great Mercies, by Means of their Righteouſneſs or Merits; and tho' they have not the leaſt Dependance on their Works, nor would ſuffer that Thought which would ſo rob *Jeſus* of his Honour, but are in a readineſs to revenge every ſuch Theft, and to lay all Glorying in the Duſt, and aſcribe to his Praiſe all their Salvation; yet are conſtantly employed to his Glory, and out of Love to him live good Lives. His Words are too dear to them to be neglected, and his Commandments too precious to be deſpiſed or diſeſteemed. Out of the Bottom of their Hearts they are glad to ſerve the *Lord Chriſt*, and rejoice at every Opportunity of doing any Thing to pleaſe him, and this not out of Fear, not for Reward, not to make a Righteouſneſs of it, or becauſe they are not fully ſatisfied to depend wholly on *the Lamb*; but as I ſaid, it is out of *pure Love* to *Jeſus*, who has ſaved them, and brought them into *his Father's* Houſhold. It is their Meat

and

and Drink to do his Will, it is natural to them, and he who acts otherwiſe, be aſſured *he has not ſeen God, neither known him.*

A Servant of God, or one who has been brought up in the Church of *God,* and ſerved under the Law, may for a Time do well, be very exact and careful, be inlightned from above, taſte with Joy *the good Word of God,* and run as if he meant ſincerely to be ſaved; who after all perhaps reſts there, or goes again back into a ſinful Life, and brings a Blot upon all his Services, *all his Righteouſneſs that he has done, ſhall not be mentioned to him, in the Sin that he has ſinned, in that ſhall he die, ſaith the Lord God.* No State is therefore ſafe or ſecure, but the Eſtate of *the Children of God.* It is above all Things neceſſary that a ſincere Perſon *make his Calling and Election ſure*; namely, that he is not content with having done much, or learnt, or underſtood, or comprehended much, but that he is ſure *Jeſus* is become *his Saviour,* and is now near to him, as *his Brother,* and as near as if *he had ſucked the Breaſts of his Mother*; that *our Saviour's Father* is *his Father,* and that he will not be aſhamed to confeſs him as ſuch, when he comes the Latter-Day upon the Earth. Then he ſhall ſay to ſuch, *Come ye bleſſed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World.* This Grace is attainable; it is preached to all Mankind; it is promiſed in all the Prophets, by our *Saviour,* and by all his Apoſtles and Evangeliſts, and may be entered by every upright Soul. A greater Favour cannot be. The Benefit is exceeding great, the Privilege inexpreſſible, but is ſurely granted to every Believer in *Chriſt Jeſus,* and is Part of the *Common-Wealth of Iſrael,* the Rights of the New-Teſtament, and what was the pure Aim and Intention of our *dear Lord and Maſter,* when he ſtooped

ſtooped to be *the Servant and Miniſter of All*, and when he paid our Debts, and died for us.

Since then all the Scriptures preach this, let none ſeem to come ſhort of it. Let not *our Chriſtianity* be only the Form, or without the happy Enjoyment of this Privilege, but let all look upon it as the *Free Gift of Grace*, and what belongs to them and their Children, and to all who believe in the Name of *Jeſus*, ſo let them ſeek it, ſo aſk it of *the Lord Chriſt*, whoſe Prerogative it is to beſtow it, and they ſhall find, *that as many as receive Jeſus, to them gives he Power to become Sons of God, even to as many as believe on his Name.*

Let the Spirit of Adoption only be given you, and all that is ſaid of this Divine Matter by St. *Paul* to the *Galatians*, will be clear and plain, you will know by Experience what that Means; *Thou art no more a Servant but a Son; we are not Children of the Bond-Woman, but of the Free*, namely, of *Jeruſalem above, who is the Mother of us all. We are Children of God by Faith in Chriſt Jeſus. Becauſe ye are Sons, God has ſent forth the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying Abba Father.*

May that merciful and gracious *Lord*, of whom it is ſaid, *Who ſhall declare his Generation?* make you of the Number of his Children, and of that Race, *who are born not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Fleſh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God.* Theſe ſhall be reckoned to *the Son of Man for a Generation*, and be named after him. Theſe ſhall help to fill up the innumerable Company of *Children, that ſhall be born to him, as Dew out of the Womb of the Morning.* May you, my dear Brethren be found among them, and be intitled to this Grace, to your Souls Comfort in this Life, and to your eternal Joy hereafter. *Amen!*

FINIS.

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